

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Consumer Protection and Safety Division
Rail Transit Safety Section

Resolution ST-141
October 25, 2012

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION ST-141 GRANTING SANTA CLARA VALLEY
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY PERMANENT VARIANCE FROM
GENERAL ORDER 143-B, SECTION 9.06 (c) (1) CLEARANCES.

SUMMARY

This resolution grants Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's request for a permanent variance to General Order 143-B, Section No. 9.06 (c) (1) Side Clearance requirements for the light-rail station platforms, allowing Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority to install Between-Car-Barriers on its station platform edges.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.) and the Federal Transit Administration (49 CFR Parts 38.63 & 38.85) require transit agencies to take steps to ensure that visually-impaired patrons do not fall from an elevated rail platform on to the trackway below in the space between the train's coupled vehicles.

This resolution grants Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority a variance from General Order 143-B for Between-Car-Barriers installation in order to comply with 49 CFR Parts 38.63 & 38.85.

BACKGROUND

By a letter dated June 29, 2012, VTA requests a permanent variance to General Order (GO) 143-B Section 9.06 (c) (1), from the minimum thirty (30) inch side clearance requirements, to install BCB at the light-rail stations on their entire system.

VTA intends to install the BCB at the edge of the station platforms to prevent patrons from falling from the elevated platform between the train's coupled vehicles during station stops.

On September 15, 2009, Commission Staff (staff) attended the demonstration of Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA's) proposed Between-Car-Barriers (BCB) system to be located along the platform edge, within the tactile warning band of station platforms. The demonstration was performed at the Almaden Light Rail Station located near the intersection of Winfield Boulevard and Coleman Avenue in San Jose, California.

Federal Transit Administration requires in 49 CFR Parts 38.63 & 38.85, implemented in 2000 series, require individuals be protected from stepping off the platform between the cars.

49 CFR Part 38.63 provides in relevant part:

Suitable devices or systems shall be provided to prevent, deter or warn individuals from inadvertently stepping off the platform between cars. Acceptable solutions include, but are not limited to, pantograph gates, chains, motion detectors or similar devices.

49 CFR Part 38.85 provides in relevant part:

Where vehicles operate in a high-platform, level-boarding mode, devices or systems shall be provided to prevent, deter, or warn individuals from inadvertently stepping off the platform between cars. Appropriate devices include, but are not limited to, pantograph gates, chains, motion detectors, or other suitable devices.

GO 143-B, Safety Rules and Regulations Governing Light Rail Transit, Section 9.06 states:

CLEARANCES. c. The minimum side clearance to obstructions higher than eight (8) inches above top-of-rail and the clearances between LRVs and streetcars

located on parallel tracks used exclusively for light rail transit operations shall be governed by the following requirements:

(1) on station platforms, in yards and along shop aisles, and other locations, including emergency walkways, where passengers, employees, or other persons are permitted or required to be while trains are in motion, the minimum clearances shall be thirty (30) inches...

DISCUSSION

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA's) rail system consists of the Guadalupe Corridor, Tasman West, Tasman East /Capitol Corridor and Vasona Line. The VTA rail system carries an average of 32,000 passengers per day. To comply with 49 CFR Part 38, VTA requests authorization to install Between-Car-Barriers (BCBs) at light-rail stations throughout their system. These BCBs are designed to prevent station patrons from falling on to the trackway below in the spaces between the train's coupled vehicles. Since the proposed BCBs will obstruct and violate the 30-inch side clearance required by Section 9.06 (c) (1) of GO 143-B, a variance from the requirements is necessary.

VTA's request letter, dated June 29, 2012, specifies that the BCB project will be implemented system-wide for light-rail stations. VTA intends to install 36-inch high bollards every nine (9) inches on a base bolted to the platform over the top of the tactile warning band near the platform edge. The total number of bollards per car gap will be twelve (12). Additionally, VTA will install a berthing point marker at station platforms to assist light rail vehicle Operators in stopping the train at the correct berthing point location.

The BCBs are not needed at six VTA light rail stations in downtown San Jose that have 3-pod design of stations (split level platforms).

VTA included its Contract Drawing for the BCB with its request letter. Further, VTA will make minor revisions to its light rail operating rules and perform associated training for all VTA Rail Certified Main Line Operators to ensure consistent berthing.

Staff has reviewed VTA's request and believes that granting the permanent variance will not have an adverse effect on system safety.

Staff recommends that the resolution be granted with the following condition(s):

Six months after implementation of Between-Car-Barriers, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority shall submit to staff a final report summarizing the findings of the BCB implementation. The report shall address:

- Installation summary
- Any difficulties or impediments to installations

NOTICE

On September 21, 2012, this Resolution was published on the Commission's Daily Calendar.

COMMENTS

The draft resolution of the Consumer Protection and Safety Division in this matter was mailed to the Parties of Interest on September 20, 2012 in accordance with Section 311 of the Public Utilities Code and Rule 14.2 (c) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure. _____ comments were received.

FINDINGS

1. VTA proposes to install BCBs at all light-rail station platforms (with the exception the six split level platforms located within the downtown transit mall) to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.) and CFR Parts 38.63 & 38.85 requirements imposed on transit systems.
2. BCBs will significantly mitigate the hazard of visually impaired patrons falling off the station platform into the space between train's coupled vehicles.

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3. By a letter dated June 29, 2012, VTA requests a permanent variance to the 30-inch side clearance requirement of GO 143-B, Section 9.06 (c) (1) for installation of platform mounted BCBs at the light-rail stations.
4. Granting the permanent variance from GO 143-B will not have a significant adverse effect on system safety.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT:

1. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority request, dated June 29, 2012, for a permanent variance to General Order 143-B, Section No. 9.06 (c) (1) Side Clearance requirements at its light-rail station platforms for the installation of Between-Car-Barriers system to meet the requirements of 49 CFR Part 38, is granted.
2. Six months after implementation of Between-Car-Barriers, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority shall submit to Consumer Protection and Safety Division staff a final report summarizing the Between-Car-Barriers implementation.
3. This resolution is effective today.

I certify that this resolution was adopted by the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting held on _____. The following Commissioners voting favorably thereon:

PAUL CLANON
Executive Director